

# RAIL EAST

The newsletter of the East Anglian branch of Railfuture



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## **The East Anglian Branch's Annual General Meeting**

The details are given on the back page. Please note that this year it will be held in Ely. Your retiring Committee hopes that you will come and contribute to the discussions, put forward your ideas for next year's programme and, perhaps, put your name forward for election to the committee.

## **Big expansion plans for the region**

The East of England Regional Assembly (EERA) have issued their draft Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) for the East of England. The region covers the six counties of Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Essex, Hertfordshire, Norfolk and Suffolk and the Unitary Authorities of Luton, Peterborough, Southend and Thurrock. The document sets out the East of England Plan to guide development in the region for the next 20 years. It includes objectives for the region that cover issues such as new development, transport, environmental resources and culture and how this might be achieved in a sustainable manner. It provides a framework for Local Authorities to produce their more detailed local plans.

The main features of the strategy are:

- 478,000 additional dwellings by 2021 – mainly in existing towns and cities
- 421,000 additional jobs
- A transport strategy based around reducing the need to travel and improving public transport between main centres with road improvements
- Rejection of an additional runway at Stansted Airport.

Although the need to link improved infrastructure with new development is highlighted throughout the document, there are real concerns that this will not happen. This concern includes water supplies as well as transport. The Environmental Summary issued with the East of England Plan notes that although the rail schemes included within the Plan would be more consistent with the sustainability objectives than the road schemes, it was much more likely that the road schemes would get the funding. Although the lack of money for rail schemes had the East of England Regional Assembly concerned, the prospect of no money for some of their pet road projects proved too much. Following discussions with the Government, the EERA was not convinced that the infrastructure funding was in place and have therefore withdrawn their endorsement of the Plan.

Despite the withdrawal of support, public consultation of the plan is still going ahead. Comments have to be submitted by 19th March 2005 and details of the plan and how to respond are on the EERA web-site: [www.eera.gov.uk](http://www.eera.gov.uk).

The Branch's comments on the plan will be discussed at our Annual General Meeting being held in Ely on the 19th February 2005.

## Cambridge meeting

A well attended Branch meeting in Cambridge heard an upbeat presentation from Tony Berkeley from the Railfreight Group on the future of rail freight in this country. Lord Berkeley noted that since rail privatisation, rail freight traffic had risen by 50% and rail had increased its market share from 8.5% to over 11.5% in the same period. There had been large investment from the private sector and competition between freight operators had helped the industry become more efficient. The future looked encouraging. There was a shortage of lorry drivers and increasing road congestion meant that the road haulage industry was finding it more difficult to meet “just in time” deliveries. Road and rail had

## News from around East Anglia

**The Inspector’s report on the Cambridge Guided Busway Inquiry** is expected in late spring. The Inspector was due to make visits along the route during January and will also visit the busway in Essen.

The recently formed **East Suffolk Line Community Partnership** has produced a new guide to the route that includes details of various attractions close to stations. Copies can be obtained from staffed stations and tourist information centres.

Work to extend platforms at **Braintree** been completed. Some peak hour trains are now 12 coaches providing much

to work together to provide, with each sector doing what it does best, to provide integrated transport solutions for business and industry.

For rail freight to continue to expand its role, gauge and capacity enhancements were needed. The amount of money required was very modest when compared with the money to build new motorways and getting more freight on rail was very popular with the public. A December 2003 survey showed 79% supported more freight on rail with only 20% wanting more roads. It was also essential that independent regulation continued to ensure sensible access to the rail network.

More details on the work of the Railfreight group can be found on [www.rfg.org.uk](http://www.rfg.org.uk)

needed extra capacity. Passenger traffic on the route has risen by 75% since 1997.

Many of the **cheapest fares on GNER** cost less now than they did in 1996. For example the cheapest London to York in 1996 was £35. If inflation is taken into account, the fare now should be around £43 instead it is just £19. GNER has also introduced a new revenue management system that will automatically release more low cost tickets on lightly loaded trains.

The Branch has welcomed plans to provide **better bus/rail interchange at Huntingdon station**. We have how-

## Take the train to the birds

The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) has produced a leaflet highlighting the number of their sites in East Anglia that are easily accessible by rail. The sites include:

Fowlmere – a 2 mile (3.5km) pleasant walk from Shepreth station between Cambridge and Hitchin.

Berney Marshes and Breydon water – rail only access via Berney Arms station and from Great Yarmouth station.

Stour Estuary Reserve – adjacent to Wrabness station on the Mayflower line.

The Lodge – a mile (1.7km) from Sandy station.

Rye Meades – less than ½ mile (1km) from Rye House station on the Hertford East branch.

ever suggested changes to the temporary parking layout to prevent cars backing out into the main exit route.

**New customer information screens** will be installed by Amey Datel on the Fen Line stations at King's Lynn, Littleport and Waterbeach stations. The work is due to be finished in 2005. The Fen Line Users' Association has asked WAGN to ensure that the Kings Lynn screens display arrival information as well as departures.

The Fen Line Users Association recently relaunched its web-site:

<http://www.flua.org.uk>

## Slow march

The Government has called for yet another study, this time looking at opportunities for private funding, before it will support the western part of the East West Rail Link. In the recently published Milton Keynes and South Midlands Sub-Regional Strategy the Government says that running trains from Oxford to Bedford and from Aylesbury to Bletchley is "under consideration" for opening some time between 2007 and 2016. The plan for 169,800 new homes in the region by 2021 has not spurred the government into action, and re-linking Bedford to Cambridge is ruled out before 2021.

In 2003 Steer Davies Gleave prepared a business case for passenger services on the western section to be restored within 30 months of receiving Government approval. This encouraged the East West Rail Consortium (representing 35 local authorities, South East England Regional Assembly and the South East England Development Agency) to submit a bid for £87m from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. To date there have been NINE studies of the East West Rail Link.

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Nick Dibben, the Branch Secretary, has changed his email address to  
nick.dibben@btinternet.com

## The new timetable

On 12th December 2004, the new timetable came into operation. For the Great Eastern mainline it was a total re-cast of the services together with changes to the branch lines. Through trains from Peterborough to London via Bury St Edmunds and Ipswich and from Lowestoft via the East Suffolk line were the headline news together with the increased frequency on the Ipswich - Cambridge route.

In the event the new services got off to a bad start with an instance of serious vandalism near Stowmarket on the second day producing chaos. The coaches and locomotives which had been transferred from other operators have proved to be in a less than satisfactory condition with the result that there have been a number of problems. There have been several short formed and cancelled trains. Apart from this, the need of commuters to rearrange their journeys has seen considerable

dissatisfaction. Overcrowding on some trains in the evening peak has resulted in passengers travelling to stations beyond Colchester having to stand for a substantial part of their journey home. Some overcrowding has been reported on the Lowestoft - Norwich line where schoolchildren use the same trains as commuters. The East Suffolk line has no through trains in the peaks as well as a significant gap in the evening.

Additional problems have arisen because of the elimination of the Romford stop for fast services in the peak hour.

Work was carried out on the class 90 locomotives over the Christmas holiday period. The refurbishment of the mark 3 coaches is expected to take sometime to complete.

There is good news for the branch lines which will see the class 150 dmu units replaced by the more modern class 156. The trains will be phased in over the next 8 months.

### Dates for your diary

**Saturday 19th February East Anglian Branch Annual General Meeting** at 1400 in the Ely Maltings

**Saturday 5th March: East Suffolk Travellers Association** meeting and illustrated talk by former railway civil engineer Mr Graham Austin on the Liverpool Street reconstruction and aspects of the East Suffolk Line at 1400 in St Mary's Church Hall Woodbridge, 14.30

**Saturday 16th April: Peterborough Norwich Rail Users Annual General Meeting** at 1115 in Thetford,

**Saturday 7th May: Railfuture National Annual General Meeting**, Bull Hotel, Peterborough.

**Saturday 5th November: Rail Users' Conference**, venue to be announced.

## Branch Annual General Meeting

The 2005 Branch Annual General Meeting will take place on Saturday 19th February at the Ely Maltings starting at 14.00. Nominations, duly proposed and seconded, for the Branch Committee with should be sent to Nick Dibben by the 15th February. The Branch is always looking for more helpers, so if people are unwilling to join the committee, there are still many tasks that need to be done. Please contact Nick Dibben if you are interested in helping out.

### Agenda

1. Welcome
2. Apologies for absence
3. Minutes and matters arising from the 2004 Annual General Meeting
4. Branch Report
5. Treasurer's Report
6. Election of Branch Officers and Committee:
  - Chairman
  - Vice Chairman
  - Secretary
  - Treasurer
  - Sales Officer
  - Membership Secretary
  - Press Officer

Other members of the committee

7. Appointment of auditor
- 9 Motions

At 15.00 we will welcome a speaker from train operator One and members of the regional transport forum STEER. (Railfuture are members)

The Sustainable Transport for the Eastern Region Annual General Meeting will follow at 16.00 and Railfuture members are invited to attend. There will be additional discussion on the Regional Plan and other regional transport matters such as airport expansion and the various road schemes. The STEER meeting will finish at 17.00.

The Maltings are a short walk from Ely Station. Ely is included in the stations within the Day Ranger zone and the tickets cost £9.

#### BRANCH OFFICERS

**Chairman:** *Vacant*

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In the last edition of Rail East there was a suggestion that one solution to the freight capacity problem was to use roads. Neither the editor nor the Branch endorse this solution but it is an “easy” option for the government which is unwilling to sanction the East - West rail without wasting more time and money on further studies.